

I urge all of my colleagues to work together so we can pass comprehensive health reform legislation. We need to pass it, and we need to pass it soon.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, as the 100th Member of the Senate, it is my great honor to pay tribute to this body's longest serving Member, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD of West Virginia, on the occasion of his record-setting 20,774th day as a Member of Congress.

I have the fondest memories, as a young staffer here, of listening to the sounds of Senator BYRD's fiddle wafting from his suite on the first floor of the Russell Senate Office Building. And I am proud today, as I do most days, to wear a wristwatch which was given to me, generously, by Senator BYRD over 20 years ago as I was completing my tenure as chairman of the Democratic Party of the United States.

I pay tribute to Senator BYRD on behalf of myself and the people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but I also pay tribute on behalf of my predecessor and a great friend of Senator BYRD's, former Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts.

It is true that Senator Kennedy and Senator BYRD did not always see eye to eye on every issue. Senator Kennedy used to joke that it was Senator BYRD who taught him how to count votes in their whip race in 1971. Actually, he taught us both how to count votes because I was a young aide to Senator Kennedy in his whip's office at the time and it turned out that Senator BYRD clearly could count votes more accurately than we could.

Over the years since, Senator Kennedy was always proud to be in this Chamber when his friend Senator BYRD would speak. As Senator Kennedy once said, he knew Senator BYRD was an expert on the Roman Senate, and he was sure Senator BYRD's "wisdom and oratorical skill would make even Cicero envious."

Senator BYRD and Senator Kennedy shared a love of the Senate, and they shared a love of poetry. One poem they returned to over the years was entitled "A Psalm of Life" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Senator BYRD, of course, knows this poem by heart, and so I need not read it all today. Instead, let me recite the last few stanzas of the Senate and for the RECORD, as these words sum up the force that is Senator BYRD:

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;
"Footprints that perhaps another
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother
Seeing, shall take heart again

"Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait."

Throughout his brilliant career, Senator BYRD has made so many footprints on the sands of time. He has touched, taught, and inspired hundreds of colleagues from every State and thousands upon thousands of Senate staff members have marveled at his genius, his dedication to the people of West Virginia, and his unparalleled service to the Senate and to this country.

I join all my colleagues in wishing him well on this special day in the history of the Senate, and I congratulate him on his incredible service to the State of West Virginia, to the Senate of the United States, and to the United States of America.

We thank you, Senator BYRD, for your service, and we congratulate you.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, let me commend my colleague, the Senator from Massachusetts, for his comments about Senator BYRD. I also want to join in recognizing and celebrating Senator BYRD's service to West Virginia and to our country. As a new Member to this body, I did not have the occasion to work as closely with Senator BYRD as others. However, as a resident of the Commonwealth of Virginia, not only did I follow the enormous respect Senator BYRD has engendered here in the Senate, but I have also watched with awe Senator BYRD's ability to bring jobs back to West Virginia. He was able to relocate many Federal agencies and activities, oftentimes that may have previously resided in Virginia, to the State of West Virginia.

I join my colleagues in commending Senator BYRD, not only for his enormous service to this body and to our country, but as someone who has been a tireless advocate for his home State of West Virginia.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in commenting on and thanking Senator BYRD for his extraordinary leadership, not just for the people of West Virginia but the people of our Nation—in fact, to millions of people around the world—because of the policies he has driven here, the speeches, the words he has put behind so many of the most remarkable policy decisions over the last half century. His work has had enormous impact, again, not just in his State and in our Nation but worldwide.

I am speaking also as a Senator from Louisiana to give firsthand witness to his sensitive and timely and extraordinary leadership after the Katrina and Rita disasters, now almost 4½ years ago; it will be 5 years this August. That is hard to believe. The hurricanes and the subsequent levee failures devastated one of the great cities in America and one of the great regions. There were very few people who stood up in

Washington. The administration at the time had a hard time grasping the scope of the disaster. But there was one person who understood. There were several others, but one in particular understood—amazingly, without even having gone down there, which was very hard to understand if you didn't go to New Orleans or south Louisiana. But he instinctively understood because of his compassion and great empathy that has been developed over a lifetime of caring, giving, understanding, and listening.

Senator BYRD heard the cries of the people and he responded. Because of his leadership on the Appropriations Committee, despite having so much stacked against us, he was able to step up. I will never forget and the people of our State will never forget the friend we have had in Senator BYRD. He continues, to this day, to watch after our recovery and support it. When New Orleans makes its 300th anniversary, which will be 2018—our city will be 300 years old—there will be a person who needs to be thanked on that day for helping the city to reach its 300th birthday, and that would be the great Senator from West Virginia ROBERT C. BYRD.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I have the great privilege of rising to pay tribute to my chairman, the longest serving Senator in the history of this country, the senior Senator from West Virginia, ROBERT C. BYRD.

He has reached a milestone among many in his career. It is an extraordinary record of service and dedication and patriotism to the country, and it reflects the values of the people of West Virginia and of this great Nation. Senator BYRD's extraordinary service is measured not just in length but accomplishments, but the length is impressive, indeed. He has 20,744 days of service as a Member of Congress—over 56 years, 10½ months. Over that time, Senator BYRD has cast over 18,500 roll-call votes, witnessed the inauguration of 11 Presidents, and he has been successful in 15 out of 15 elections.

For over 60 years, Senator BYRD has represented the people of West Virginia tirelessly, with a great deal of energy and a great deal of success. He started in the West Virginia House of Delegates and then was elected to the West Virginia State Senate. Then he went to the U.S. House of Representatives. Finally, he came here to the U.S. Senate, where he is currently serving in an unprecedented ninth full term.

I think Senator BYRD's success is a reflection of his steady progress, learning first about the people of his home State as he worked among them, knowing them well because they were his friends and neighbors; and then going on into local government and dealing with the concerns as a State representative and then as a State senator; and then coming to the House of Representatives, understanding the operation of the House and how he could help the people of West Virginia; and finally, he coming here to the U.S. Senate.

What is incredibly impressive about Senator BYRD is that he is not only the longest serving Senator in the history of this country, he is the most knowledgeable Senator with respect to the history of our body. He is the author—he literally wrote the book on the U.S. Congress and the Senate, among so many others that he has written. This reflects his incredible talent and intellect but also his incredible hard work and tenacity, and it reflects the range of experience he has had.

No one knows this body better than ROBERT BYRD. No one has served it longer. Nobody has served it with the same kind of energy, insight, and dedication. It has been reflected in West Virginia, across the Nation, and across the globe. For example, in 1947, shortly before Senator BYRD first came to Washington D.C. as a U.S. Congressman, there were only four miles of divided four-lane highway, in West Virginia. Today, as a result of Senator BYRD's work, the expansive Appalachian Development Highway System is nearing completion. He understood, as we must today, that economic development is not only a fundamental need, but that it results largely from the infrastructure improvements that speed commerce and literally connect people to one another.

Senator BYRD also is a tireless advocate for miners, those men and women—principally men—who go down and literally risk their lives in the coal mines. He knows this firsthand. As a result, mining-related injuries in West Virginia have significantly declined since Senator BYRD came here—the results of his actions, the results of his understanding, and the results of his commitment to the people he served. He worked hard each and every day for those who risk their lives in a dangerous occupation and deserve the attention and respect of this body and our country.

He has done much more than help the people of West Virginia. As I indicated before, as the greatest scholar in our body, he has demonstrated a profound understanding and respect for the Constitution of the United States. He has shown that not just in words but in deeds. He has been prepared to stand up when he thought constitutional values were being impaired. Indeed, no commitment is greater to Senator BYRD than his commitment to the Constitution and the values therein. He has stood up forcefully and persuasively on so many occasions to defend the Constitution and to serve truly the oath we all take to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution.

On Friday, Senator BYRD will celebrate his 92nd birthday. He will celebrate that in his usual fashion: He will work, I am sure. He will work for the people of West Virginia, for the people of this country, and for the people of the world. He will reflect back on his dearest partner, his wife, who was his support, comfort, and inspiration. He will reflect upon his children, grand-

children, and great-grandchildren. He will reflect upon a life well lived in service to his country. But more important, he will look ahead to the work he will do as he finishes this term and prepares for his next election to represent the people of West Virginia.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I would like to acknowledge the service of Senator BYRD, the senior Member of the Senate who, today, will become the longest serving Member of the U.S. Congress ever in our Nation's history.

When I first came to this body as a young aide to Senator Howard Baker 42 years ago, Senator BYRD had already been here as a Senator for 10 years. He had been in the Congress 6 more years than that.

I remember when he, Senator Baker, was elected majority leader and Senator BYRD was the Democratic leader, Baker went to BYRD and said: BOB, I have a proposal for you. I will never learn the rules as well as you know them, so I won't surprise you if you won't surprise me.

Senator BYRD said to Senator Baker: Howard, let me think about it.

So he thought about it overnight, came back, and that was their deal the next day, and that is the way they worked for 4 years in managing this Senate. Senator BYRD and Senator Baker both read David McCullough's book. Senator BYRD told me it changed their minds about the Panama Canal in 1980 in a decisive decision that was controversial in the Senate. I worked with him and the late Senator Kennedy, whom the Presiding Officer succeeded, on American history, and we have legislation pending which I hope we will pass when we reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act consolidating all the Federal Government's activities to encourage our children to learn U.S. history so they will know what it means to be an American.

Senator BYRD now more than ever is a part of that history. He is an indispensable Member of this body. He teaches us as well as serves with us and we honor him for his service.

I yield the floor.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to once again join my colleagues in addressing the need for comprehensive health care reform. The Senator from New Hampshire, Mrs. SHAHEEN, earlier spoke on health care reform and its effect on small business. I know my colleague, Senator UDALL from Colorado, is going to be speaking soon. And I know we are going to be joined, as well, a little bit later by Senator LANDRIEU, who takes a leadership role on the issues affecting small businesses, as chair of the Small Business Committee. I rise today to stress how important health care reform is to the small business community. Currently, there are small businesses across America that have been hit very hard

by the effects of the recession. Small businesses are struggling as they try to keep their doors open, with the enormous constriction of credit that is taking place. Small businesses are struggling to have the finances to expand; even healthy small businesses, as we have seen. Banks continue to draw back in capital and try to build up their own balance sheets. The people who have taken the hardest hit by the restriction on capital and the restriction on lending have been small businesses across this country.

So we have the enormous challenges small businesses have felt by the recession that has been exacerbated by the constriction of lending, and then we add on top of that the enormous challenges that small businesses face in the health care market. The only people who pay retail—who pay full price for their health care benefits in America today—are small businesses and those who purchase health care on the individual-based market. There is no group that will more benefit, or have more to gain from meaningful health care reform, than small businesses.

Small businesses currently lack the bargaining power of large firms and pay as much as 18 percent more for the same health insurance as larger companies. If you work in a large company you get the benefit of the larger pool, and you are better able to bargain for your health insurance rates. If you are poor and cannot afford health insurance, you get access to Medicaid. If you are a senior, you get access to Medicare. Small businesses are the group that falls through the cracks. They don't have access to this purchasing power, and consequently pay, on average, about 18 percent more for health insurance than larger companies.

As health insurance costs continue to rise, more and more small businesses can no longer even afford to offer health insurance to their employees. And if they do, their employees can't afford the co-payments to purchase health insurance. In fact, nearly one-quarter of the uninsured in our country works for small businesses. Between 2000 and 2009, the percentage of firms with less than 10 employees—the heart of small businesses—offering insurance coverage fell from 57 percent to 46 percent. Among people with employer-based coverage in January of 2006, one-sixth lost their coverage by 2008. Nearly three-quarters of small businesses that do not offer coverage to their employees cite high premiums as the reason. Small businesses want to offer health benefits to their employees, but are priced out of the market and cannot afford it.

Many small business employees are left uninsured and, in turn, rely on the health care system to pick up the costs when they get sick. It is these people who show up at emergency rooms and access the most inefficient part of our health care system. They are often-times not people who are unemployed, but employees of small businesses. Enacting market reforms such as creating